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# REMARKS

BY

THE REV. DR. WORCESTER'S

*SECOND*

LETTER TO MR. CHANNING,

ON

AMERICAN UNITARIANISM.

BY

WILLIAM E. CHANNING,

Minister of the Church of Christ in Federal Street.

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BOSTON :

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY WELLS AND BLISS.

1815





## REMARKS. &c.

THOSE who have read the second letter addressed to me by Dr. Worcester, will not be surprised at the appearance of these remarks. I intended to leave the controversy to the decision of the publick, who, I thought, were in possession of all the materials requisite to the formation of a correct judgment. But Dr. Worcester has called on me to retract what he pronounces a "flagrant misstatement" of an important part of his letter ; and he has done this with a solemnity, which hardly permits me to observe the silence on which I had resolved. These remarks will relate primarily to that point, but I shall not restrain myself from offering observations on other parts of his letter.

Dr. Worcester has complained with much earnestness, that I have imputed to him, in my former remarks, a "bad spirit and intention." To this I answer, that I really did consider his letter as very unworthy of him as a christian and a christian minister. I did think, that if the principles of his letter could be reduced to practice, every Unitarian would be driven from the church, and every minister of Unitarian sentiments would be driven from the pulpit. I did think, that he discovered a strange insensibility towards his brethren, whose moral purity had been so wantonly assailed in the Review of the Panoplist. I also acknowledge, that I did not discover any marks of that affection and respect towards myself, of which he speaks in his second letter. Believing that his remarks directly tended to divide the church, and to expose a respectable body of christians to reproach and injurious treatment, I

spoke of this tendency with plainness, but without bitterness or anger. Whether my interpretation of Dr. Worcester's letter, in these respects, was unauthorized, I cheerfully leave to the decision of those who have read it. My own impressions have coincided with those of all around me; and I cannot believe, that I have not one friend of a candid mind, and of sufficient ability to decide on the obvious import of a letter written in our native tongue.

Dr. Worcester, however, disclaims the feelings and intentions which I have ascribed to him. He professes to have been governed by respect and affection towards me, and by a spirit of forbearance, kindness, tenderness, and undissembled good will towards his brethren. That Dr. Worcester is sincere in reporting what *now* appears to him to have been the state of his mind during the composition of his first letter, I am far from denying. But on a subject like this, memory is sometimes treacherous; and I confess I cannot shake off the conviction, that some improper feelings, perhaps unsuspected by Dr. Worcester, occasionally guided his pen. But I mean not to pursue this point. I have not the least disposition to attribute to Dr. Worcester any intentions which he disclaims. I had much rather believe, that his style is unhappy, than that his temper is evil. Most sincerely do I wish, that his heart may be a stranger to every unworthy sentiment, that his life may be adorned with every virtue, and be crowned with every blessing.

#### THE CHARGE OF "FLAGRANT MISSTATEMENT."

I now come to my great object. In my former remarks, I observed, that Dr. Worcester "has so-  
"lemnly and publicly given all his influence to the  
"opinion, that we, and all who agree with us on the  
"subject of the Trinity, are to be disowned by the

" church of Christ. The obvious import of the con-  
 " cluding part of his letter, (and it is the obvious  
 " import, and not a strained and circuitous interpre-  
 " tation which I regard,) may be thus expressed.  
 " ' Every man who cannot admit as a doctrine of  
 " scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in  
 " one God, which I and other orthodox christians  
 " embrace, believes an opposite gospel, rejects the  
 " true gospel, despises the authority of Jesus Christ,  
 " is, of course, a man wholly wanting in true piety,  
 " and without christian virtue, and may, in perfect  
 " consistency with christian love, be rejected as un-  
 " worthy the name of a christian.' " On this repre-  
 " sentation of his sentiments, Dr. Worcester thus re-  
 " marks, " Your statement of the import of the  
 " concluding part of my letter is most palpably  
 " incorrect and unjust. And though I attribute this  
 " incorrectness and injustice not to any injurious in-  
 " tention, but to that habit of thinking and feeling of  
 " which I have before taken notice ; yet, after what  
 " I have now stated, I think I have a right to call  
 " upon you, *and I do solemnly call upon you, to retract*  
 " *this flagrant misstatement.* I know, indeed, you  
 " have given it to be understood, that you shall not  
 " write again ; but, Sir, the publick disputant, who  
 " makes this resolve, ought to be careful, not merely  
 " not to put down aught in malice, but to write  
 " nothing which justice to his opponent and to the  
 " cause of truth—nothing which the sacred princi-  
 " ples of christianity will require him to retract."

This is the charge, which has again brought me  
 before the publick, the charge of *palpable incorrect-*  
*ness and injustice*, and of *flagrant misstatement.* I now  
 intend fairly and fully to meet it. I intend to show,  
 that in giving this interpretation, I followed the na-  
 tural meaning of Dr. Worcester's words, that I put  
 no violence on his language, and that no other sense

would have offered itself to an unprejudiced mind. I shall state the passages which led to the representation which I have formed, beginning with those which are least decisive, as these first present themselves in the letter, and requesting the reader to form his judgment, not from a part, but from the whole which shall be presented to him.

In page 24, of Dr. Worcester's letter, I found the following quotation from scripture, with the subjoined remark: "St. Peter says, 'There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.' If this language sound harsh and unfashionable," Dr. Worcester continues, "I trust, Sir, you will have the goodness not to impute the fault to me; or that you will not on account of any unpleasantness in the language, refuse to give attention to the momentous sentiment contained in it." I did consider this text of scripture, followed by this remark, as intended by Dr. Worcester to be applied to my brethren and to myself, and to hold us up to the community as false teachers, who have brought in *damnable* heresies, who have *denied the Lord that bought us*, and who are bringing on ourselves *swift destruction*. I believed that every reader would give this application to the passage, and that some would be confirmed by it in denying to all Unitarian ministers the christian character. Dr. Worcester has frankly acknowledged the impropriety of the remark which follows the text; and I introduce it now, not for the sake of casting on him the slightest reproach, but simply to state the impression which it naturally communicated, at the time when my remarks were written.

In page 21, Dr. Worcester speaks of "the doctrines on which we differ." as "doctrines which

“immediately affect the very foundations of our faith;” and he adds, that “a true faith is the vital principle of all holy practice, and of all the works which are good and acceptable in the sight of God.” I understood this passage as strongly intimating, that Unitarian principles shake the *very foundation* of all holy practice, and of all good works.

In page 24, I met the following remarkable passage: “*The God* whom you worship, is different from *ours*,” and a little below, “if we are wrong in regard to the object of our worship, we can hardly be right in *any* part of our religion.” I understood this passage as strongly intimating, that the whole religion of Unitarians is rendered worthless, by their departure from the “orthodox,” on the subject of the Trinity.

Page 29, I met the following passage, which seemed to me to admit but one construction. Dr. Worcester is speaking of the different schemes of Mr. Belsham, and of “orthodox christians;” and he says, “One or the other of these schemes must be what St. Paul denominates ‘another gospel,’ and against which and its abettors he solemnly pronounces his apostolick anathema.” Which of these two schemes Dr. Worcester intended to mark out as “another gospel,” is a question which no reader of his letter will wish me to discuss. Who doubts that it was Mr. Belsham’s? Against this scheme then, and against its abettors, the apostolick *curse* is pronounced. This I certainly understood to be Dr. Worcester’s meaning, and I see not what other sense the passage will bear. I also had not a doubt that Dr. Worcester in representing the abettors of Mr. Belsham’s scheme as *accursed*, intended to represent them as wholly destitute of piety and christian virtue, for this I naturally conceived was implied in the curse of God. Dr. Worcester indeed says, that

he did not draw this inference, but it seemed to me too plain to need the formality of a deduction. I believe, that this will be granted by all to be the plain sense of his words—But it may be said that this passage only includes the followers of Mr. Belsham. Let the reader observe Dr. Worcester's phraseology. He does not say *followers*, but *abettors*. Let the reader then look back to pages 10 and 11 of Dr. Worcester's letter. He will there find Dr. Worcester very strongly intimating that the *liberal party generally* are partakers in the deeds and guilt of Mr. Belsham, because they bear no decided testimony against them. The natural import, then, of this passage is, not only that Mr. Belsham in particular, but that the liberal party in general, fall under the *apostolick curse*. But the next passage is still more decisive.

Page 32, I met the following passage. "Is it  
 "a violation of the great law of love for the friends of  
 "truth to decline communion with its rejecters? We  
 "have nothing to do here with slight diversities of  
 "opinion; with differences about modes or forms, or  
 "inconsiderable points of faith or practice. Our con-  
 "cern is with differences of a radical and fundamental  
 "nature; such as exist between orthodox Christians  
 "and Unitarians of all degrees, even down to the  
 "creed of Mr. Belsham: for to this point you have  
 "yourself fairly reduced the present question. Yes,  
 "Sir, the simple point here at issue is, Whether it  
 "be a violation of the law of love, for believers in  
 "the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, to separate from  
 "believers in another and an opposite gospel? If  
 "yours is the true Gospel, then ours is another; if  
 "ours is the true Gospel, then yours is another." I  
 clearly understood Dr. Worcester, in this passage, as  
 saying, that the differences between "*orthodox Chris-*  
 "*tians*" and *Unitarians* are radical and fundamental,

and that *I* and *my brethren* and *Unitarians of all degrees* hold “another gospel,” and even an opposite gospel to the true. I understood too, that as he considered Mr. Belsham and his abettors as *accursed* because they had “another gospel,” he intended to represent me, and all who agree with me in rejecting the “orthodox” doctrine of the Trinity, as also falling under the apostle’s curse, because he represents our gospel not only as “another” but as opposite to the true gospel. I also understood his pointed interrogations as strongly teaching, that the “friends of truth” (a phrase never doubtful in Dr. Worcester’s mouth) may separate themselves from us and decline communion with us, without any “violation of Christian love.” What other interpretation this passage can bear, I confess myself as yet unable to conceive.

Page 33, I met with a passage which also seemed to me very plain and decisive. Dr. Worcester asks, “Would it conduce more to the promotion of truth, “for the believers in the true gospel, to hold fellowship with the believers in another gospel, than to “separate from them? We have seen in what way “only this fellowship can be maintained. If it is to “be maintained, the *principal doctrines of the gospel* “must cease to be clearly preached; divine worship “must cease to be conducted on principles distinguishingly Christian, &c. &c. But is this the way, “Sir, to promote the truth in the church and the “world? Is it not rather the way to *extinguish* the “*light of the ministry*, the *light of the church*, the *light of the world*, to throw back the children of light “into darkness and *the shadow of death*, and to leave “the *prince of darkness* to triumph in an *unlimited and “undisturbed empire*?” I thought this passage very plain. I understood Dr. Worcester as saying, that were “orthodox Christians” to wave in their preaching and in publick worship those peculiarities which

are disapproved by Unitarians, the light of the gospel would be put out, the ministry would be useless, Christians would fall back into the shadow of death, and Satan would rule the minds of men without *any limitation or any disturbance* to his power. In other words, I understood Dr. Worcester as saying, that where a Unitarian ministry and worship are established, the minds of men are *altogether* unenlightened by the gospel, and are abandoned wholly to the sway of the prince of darkness. This is indeed a horrible sentiment.—But as yet I see no explanation of the passage by which it can be avoided.

I now come to the last passage which I shall quote, found in page 35. “Sir, the differences, which exist  
“between the Unitarians and the orthodox christians  
“are certainly of a nature to demand the most serious and earnest attention. They concern most  
“directly and essentially the glory of God, the honour of the Saviour, the welfare of the church, and  
“the salvation of men. In comparison with these,  
“the difference between Dissenters and Episcopalians, between Pædo-baptists and Anti-pædo-baptists, are matters of mere feature and complexion.  
“Utterly in vain is the attempt to put these differences out of light, to conceal their magnitude and  
“momentous consequences; or by a raised cry of  
“bigotry, illiberality, and intolerance, to divert the  
“publick attention from them. They must and will  
“be fearlessly discussed and seriously considered;  
“and ministers, and churches, professed christians,  
“and all others must and will be brought to the  
“solemn decision—whether they will be *for Christ,*  
“*or against him* ; whether they will receive and hold  
“fast his truth, or *despise and reject* it; whether they  
“will bow to his authority, and trust in his grace, or  
“*refuse to have him to reign over them, and condemn*  
“*his salvation.*” This passage seemed to me perfectly plain when I wrote my remarks, and I am yet



unable to give it a different interpretation. Dr. Worcester speaks in this passage of Unitarians in the broadest sense of the word, of Unitarians as opposed to "orthodox christians," i. e. of all who reject the "orthodox" doctrine of the Trinity. He says that the differences between this class and the "orthodox" concern most directly and *essentially* the *salvation* of men ; that these differences, in spite of clamour and concealment, will be fearlessly discussed ; and that in deciding on these differences, in choosing between these parties, men will in fact decide whether they will be *for Christ*, will receive and bow to his truth, or will be *against him*, will *despise* his truth and salvation, and *refuse* to have him to reign over him. I thought this passage too obvious to admit dispute. I understood Dr. Worcester as charging Unitarians of all degrees with contempt and rejection of the authority of Jesus Christ, and of course, with entire destitution of piety and christian virtue.

I have selected several passages from Dr. Worcester's letter, which appear to me to vindicate entirely the statement which I made of his sentiments. Let me now ask the reader to examine them in the connexion in which they stand. He will find nothing thrown in by Dr. Worcester to restrain their natural import ; *not one word* expressive of charity for Unitarians *of any class* ; not one word to soften the severity of his censure. His whole reasonings and interrogations appeared to me to have one bearing, to breathe one spirit, and left me without a doubt as to his real meaning.

I can further say that there was nothing in the state of my mind unfavourable to a fair interpretation of Dr. Worcester's letter. I regarded him as a man of candour and moderation. I expected nothing like exclusion and denunciation. Seldom have I known a more cruel disappointment than in reading

his first letter. To this I can add, that among those with whom I have conversed, I have found but one sentiment in regard to his meaning. I cannot therefore believe, that my prejudices have blinded me, and that I am chargeable with "palpable and flagrant misstatement."

Dr. Worcester however assures me that I have misrepresented him; and I have no disposition to question the sincerity, with which he now declares, that he did not intend to communicate the sentiments which I ascribed to him. I cannot indeed avoid the belief, that his recollections on this point are imperfect, and that in the hurry of his thoughts and feelings, he was not so watchful over his motives as he now imagines. With this, however, I have no concern. I am satisfied with having shown, that my interpretation was natural, and indeed unavoidable, and I cheerfully record the protest of Dr. Worcester against this interpretation. I am pleased to witness the sensibility with which he repels the charge of denying to Anti-Trinitarians all piety and virtue. I observe in this a degree of candour of which I could not discern the faintest ray in his first letter.

DR. WORCESTER'S CONCESSION IN FAVOUR OF DR.  
CLARKE.

There is another part of Dr. Worcester's letter which also gave me some pleasure. I refer to that part, in which he expresses some charitable sentiments towards Dr. Samuel Clarke. He tells us, "that he is by no means prepared to say that every one who adopts Dr. Clarke's views of the Trinity rejects the true gospel, embraces another, and is devoid of christian faith and virtue." Now if he will act consistently with these sentiments, and with the charitable dispositions which he seems inclined to exercise towards the author of "Bible News,"

the controversy between us will soon end. As far as I understand the prevalent sentiments among liberal christians in this quarter of our country, they appear to me substantially to agree with the views of these excellent men; and were we required to select human leaders in religion, I believe, that we should range ourselves under their standard in preference to any other. Dr. Clarke believed, that the Father alone is the Supreme God, and that Jesus Christ is not the Supreme God, but derived his being, and all his power and honours from the Father, even from an act of the Father's power and will. He maintains, that as the scriptures have not taught us the manner in which the Son derived his existence from his Father, it is presumptuous to affirm, that the Son was created, or, that there was a time when he did not exist. On these subjects the word of God has not given us light, and therefore we ought to be silent. The author of "Bible News," in like manner affirms, that the Father only is the Supreme God, that Jesus is a distinct being from God, and that he derives every thing from his Father. He has some views relating to the "proper Sonship" of God, which neither liberal nor "orthodox" christians generally embrace. But the prevalent sentiments of liberal christians seem to me to accord substantially with the systems I have above described. Like Dr. Clarke, the majority of this class feel that the scriptures have not taught the mode of Christ's derivation. They therefore do not call Christ a creature, but leave the subject in the obscurity in which they find it, carrying with them, however, an impression, that the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God in a peculiarly high sense, and in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being. With respect to the ATONEMENT, the great body of liberal christians seem to me to accord pre-

cisely with the author of "Bible News," or rather both agree very much with the profound Butler. Both agree, that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and intercession, obtains forgiveness for sinful men, or that on account, or in consequence of what Christ has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent, and blessings, forfeited by sin, are bestowed. On the question which is often asked, how the death of Christ has this blessed influence, they generally think that the scriptures have given us little light, and that it is the part of wisdom to accept the kind appointment of God, without constructing theories for which the materials must be chiefly borrowed from our own imagination.

My motive for making the preceding statement is no other than a desire to contribute whatever may be in my power to the peace of our churches. I have hoped that by this representation, some portion of the charity which has been expressed towards Dr. Clarke, and the author of "Bible News," may be extended towards their Unitarian brethren; and that thus the ecclesiastical division which is threatened may be averted. Let it not, however, be imagined that I or my friends are anxious *on our own account* to extort from the "orthodox" an acknowledgment, that possibly we hold the true gospel, and are not "devoid of christian faith and virtue." We regard other christians as brethren, but can in no degree recognize them as superiours in the church of our common master. We do not dread the censures which they may pass on our honest opinions: We rejoice that we have a higher judge, whose truth it is our labour to learn, obey, and maintain, and whose favour will be distributed by other principles than those which prevail in a prejudiced and shortsighted world. But, whilst we mean not to be suitors to our brethren; we are willing and desirous, by any

fair representations, to save them from a course, which, as we firmly believe, will be injurious to their own characters, injurious to their brethren, unfriendly to the diffusion of the gospel, and highly offensive to our common and benevolent master.

Happy should I be, if by any representation or any honourable concessions on our part, our churches could be preserved from the shock which threatens them. But on this point Dr. Worcester's last letter is as discouraging as the first. He indeed disclaims the intention of denying to Anti-trinitarians all piety and virtue. But the tendency of his letters must be obvious to the humblest understanding, and I doubt not that many carry from them the impression, that Unitarians criminally reject the gospel, and ought to be driven from the church. This effect, whether intended or not, is produced, and for this we hold Dr. Worcester responsible.

#### THE METHODS OF RENDERING UNITARIANS ODISIOUS.

In his last letter, one great object seems to be, to paint in the strongest colours the differences between Unitarians and Trinitarians, and to produce the most unfavourable impression in regard to the former. To effect this object, he again and again brings forward the views of the lowest Unitarians, and culls the most offensive passages from the works of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham. I know that he throws in a caution against the inference, that all Unitarians are responsible for these views: but I am persuaded, that the effect on common readers is, that they identify this whole class of Christians with Mr. Belsham and Dr. Priestley. Now to this I object. It is well known that every denomination of Christians is broken into various subdivisions. For instance, among those who adopt the great principles of Calvin, are Sandemanians, Antinomians, Fatalists, and I may add, Universalists. Suppose now that in delineating

Calvinism, I should lay the chief stress on these peculiarities. Or suppose, that I should ransack the writings of Trinitarians, should collect all their crude notions and wild explanations of the Trinity, and should bring forward the horrible language, in which some have spoken of God's wrath burning against his Son, and of the blood of Jesus appeasing the fury of the Father. Would not Calvinists and Trinitarians pronounce me unfair, if by such methods I should lead common readers to imagine, that they were generally favourable to these offensive sentiments. It is an indisputable fact, that Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham have, comparatively, few followers among the Anti-trinitarian clergy of this country. For myself, I have read very few of the writings of these gentlemen, and chiefly from want of sympathy with their general views. Their theology appears to me very defective, and their theory of materialism and of necessity, which they have attempted to incorporate with their theology, seems to me unfriendly to a sense of responsibility, and to elevation of moral feeling. Are we then to be confounded with the lower Unitarians, because we happen to accord with them in the great point, that the Father alone is the supreme God, and that Jesus Christ derives from him his being and all his powers.—Do any ask me on what ground I admit those, whose theology is so defective, to be Christians? I answer; precisely on the ground on which I acknowledge the Christian character of another denomination, whose *additions* to the simple gospel seem to me at least as exceptionable as the *deficiencies* of their brethren. But what did I say? that *I admit* these men to be Christians! They need no admission of mine. Professing Jesus to be their head, and exhibiting in their lives a reverence for his gospel, they have a place in Christ's church which I did not give, and which neither I nor any other man can take away.

Another method of awakening public feeling against the Unitarians, is to represent them as obliged by their sentiments to give up the doctrine of the atonement. It is indeed very true, that Unitarians say nothing about *infinite* atonement, and they shudder when they hear, what Dr. Worcester seems to assert, that the ever blessed God suffered and died on the cross. They reject these representations, because they find not one passage in scripture which directly asserts them, or gives them support. Not *one* word do we hear from Christ or his Apostles of an *infinite* atonement. In not *one* solitary text, is the efficacy of Christ's death in obtaining forgiveness, ascribed to his being the Supreme God. All this is theology of man's making, and strongly marked with the hand of its author. But the doctrine of the atonement, taken in the broad sense which I have before stated, is not rejected by Unitarians. In my former letter, I adduced two distinguished Unitarians, Dr. Clarke, and the author of Bible News, in whose valuable writings this doctrine is stated and maintained. Dr. Worcester does not deny the fact, but to my astonishment has attempted to escape its force, by maintaining that these gentlemen do not deny the essential divinity of Jesus Christ, and are therefore not obliged to renounce the atonement. What! Dr. Clarke and Mr. Noah Worcester do not deny the essential divinity of Jesus Christ! I assure Dr. Worcester then, that neither I nor my friends deny it, and that, according to his own language, we are under no necessity of denying the doctrine of the atonement. The fact is, that some of the best works on the atonement have come from the pens of Unitarians. Mr. Tomkins, one of the most zealous Unitarians of his age, and I believe a sufferer for his principles, published a well known treatise, called "Jesus Christ the Mediator," in which the doctrine of atonement is more strenuously insisted on, than even by Dr. Clarke and

Mr. Noah Worcester. Not long ago, there was published in this country, I think under the patronage of Trinitarians, a work on the atonement by Hampton, called "Candid Remarks on Dr. Taylor, &c." which, as I well recollect, appeared to me, when I read it, to be decidedly the production of an Unitarian. It contains not one word about an *infinite* atonement made by the *Supreme God*. The sentiments of the work, I think, accord in the main with the views of many Unitarians in this country. Unitarianism, then, does not exclude the doctrine of atonement.

Another method by which the publick feelings are to be awakened against Unitarians, is the frequent assertion, that they disbelieve the Trinity, because the doctrine is mysterious, and because they prefer reason to revelation, human wisdom to the wisdom of God. Dr. Worcester says to me, "The doctrine of the Trinity the Unitarians utterly deny, *not because there is no proof of it in the Scriptures*, but because it is a doctrine (as you repeatedly and emphatically pronounce) perplexing, mysterious, and not to be understood." What will common readers infer from this, and from other passages in his letter? Why, that we do not rest on scripture, as the ground of our rejection of this doctrine, or at least, that we do not consider the scriptures as very strongly opposed to the Trinity, and that we assail it chiefly with weapons furnished by reason. Now, as far as my knowledge of Unitarian writers extends, this impression is altogether unfounded. We do indeed object to the Trinity, that, as it is often stated, it is an unintelligible proposition; and we say, what I presume Dr. Worcester will as freely say, that it is out of our power to believe a proposition of which we do not *know the meaning*. It is also true, that when the doctrine is stated, as it sometimes is, in words which we understand; when for example we are told by



the pious Howe, that the three persons in God are three minds; we insist that it involves a palpable contradiction, and we argue precisely as the protestants do with the papists, that a doctrine involving a contradiction cannot be from God. But Unitarians never stop here. They always declare that Scripture with one voice disowns the doctrine of the Trinity, and that of all the fictions of theologians, the doctrine of three persons in the one God, has perhaps the least countenance from the Bible. Their writings are *filled* with quotations from Scripture. Some of them, like Dr. Clarke's, consist almost entirely of texts arranged under proper heads. Unitarians believe, and constantly affirm, that no laboured comments and no critical skill are required, to teach common Christians the great truth, that the Father alone is the supreme God, and that Jesus Christ is a derived and dependent being; and they believe and affirm, that the opposite sentiment is chiefly maintained by appeals to men's fears, and by artificial excitement of their feelings. This is the ground taken by all the Unitarians whom I have known, and on this Scripture ground I profess myself to rest. I am not conscious of the least prejudice against the doctrine of the Trinity. My earliest prepossessions must have been in its favour. But in my youth, before I had read a book on the subject, the Scriptures suggested doubts of its truth, and by the study chiefly of the Scriptures, my doubts have grown up into a solid conviction. *The Scriptures*, in my view, are the strength of the Unitarian cause; and I am persuaded, that they are continually extending it in opposition to the strongest influences of education. I have found from conversing with pious people of both sexes, that the Scriptures always gave them the idea, that God and Jesus Christ were distinct beings, and that Jesus derived his being and power from God. They have sometimes told me, that they

have wished to resist this impression, that they have dreaded to depart from principles which were early instilled as essential, that they have shrunk from a doubt of the Trinity as from a sin; but still the language of Scripture has forced them to doubt and disbelieve. This is the history of many minds; and many, I am confident, have buried in silence anxious scruples, which they dared not clothe in words.

I state this with great distinctness and strength, that I may repel and remove a common mistake among Christians, that we reject the Trinity because we cannot reconcile it with reason, although we can hardly help acknowledging it as a Scripture doctrine. It is not because we exalt reason above Scripture, but because we revere the Scriptures, because we fear God, that we maintain Unitarian principles. We *dare* not offer prayers to the Holy Ghost, because we find not *one* command, or *one* example of such worship, in the gospel of our Master; and we honour him too entirely to depart from his plain rules on so important a subject. We read too in the Scriptures such passages as these. “My Father is greater than I.” “This is eternal life, that men may know *thee* the ONLY TRUE GOD, and Jesus Christ whom *thou hast sent*.” “Of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but THE FATHER, THE FATHER ONLY.” “I can do *nothing of myself*.” “My doctrine is not *mine*, but his who sent me. If any will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, *whether* it be of God, or whether I speak *of myself*.” We hear these passages from the very lips of our honoured and beloved Lord; and with these passages engraven on our minds, and supported by the whole current of Scripture, we dare not, we *dare not* approach Jesus Christ as the only living, the only true God. It is from reverence for his character and instructions, from fear of offending him, from a conscientiousness

which would prompt us to sacrifice all in his service, that we offer him no homage, but in the character of the SON of the ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD.

Another method of awakening the feelings of Christians on the subject of the Trinity, is to address their fears. It is common with Trinitarians, and Dr. Worcester has learned it, to say to people, "*If the Trinity rests on the sure foundation of divine testimony, if Jesus Christ is essentially divine, &c. &c. is it a light thing to reject these doctrines, to refuse to Jesus divine honours, &c. &c.*" Appeals of this kind, which are ordinarily connected with positive assertions of the truth of the Trinity, are worth a thousand arguments, and terrify into silence the doubts which lurk in many minds. I mourn that Christians should think so unworthily of Jesus, as to be moved by this language. This language evidently supposes, that Jesus, our merciful Saviour, overlooks the general temper of our minds, the general obedience of our lives, and, like a jealous sovereign, is prepared to punish every deficiency of homage to himself, however unintentionally the tribute may be withheld, and however sincere and upright the heart which unconsciously withholds it. And is this the character of our merciful Lord? Suppose that a human benefactor, of exalted endowments, were to confer on you some great blessing, and suppose that through ignorance of these endowments, you should not address him with all the terms of homage which they deserve, but should yet be sincerely grateful for the benefit he has conferred, and should love and imitate his excellence as far as it is known? Think you, that he would spurn your imperfect tribute, and drive you from his presence? And will Jesus, whose kindness was stronger than death, who bore so patiently the low views of his disciples, will *he* cast from him those, who at the present day revere his authority, study his word, and labour to derive from

that pure fountain the very truths which he taught respecting himself, and respecting the service which is his due. I am persuaded, that at the last day the Trinitarian will be found in a great error, and were I disposed, I could make as moving an appeal to his fears as Dr. Worcester can make to ours. But if there be a principle, which above all others shines resplendently in the sacred volume, it is this, that he who breathes the spirit and follows the steps of Jesus, however faint or defective be his views, will certainly enter into the joy of his Lord.

Another method of awakening the feelings of the community against Unitarian sentiments is this. Dr. Worcester charges me again and again with attempting studiously to conceal the differences between Unitarians and Trinitarians, as if our sentiments were too horrible to be brought fully and fairly to the light. He intimates that *we* "dread a development." And does Dr. Worcester really believe that we stand in awe of *him*, or his "orthodox" brethren? We respect many of our opponents, but we *dread* none. Our love of peace, they may be assured, has another origin than fear or selfish views. It is from deep conviction, and not from the principle which Dr. Worcester insinuates, that I have stated once and again, that the differences between Unitarians and Trinitarians lie more in sounds than in ideas; that a barbarous phrasology is the chief wall of partition between these classes of Christians; and that would Trinitarians tell us what they mean, their system would generally be found little else, than a mystical form of the Unitarian doctrine. These two classes of Christians appear to me to concur in receiving the most interesting and practical truths of the gospel. Both believe in one God of infinite perfection; and we must remember, that it is this perfection of God, and not his unknown substance, which is the proper object of the Christian's love.

Both believe in the great doctrine, that eternal life is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. Both learn from the lips and life of Jesus the same great principles of duty, the same exalted views of human perfection, and the same path to immortality. I could easily extend these points of agreement; and what are the questions which divide them? Why these; first, Whether the One God be three distinct subsistences,\* or three persons, or three "*somewhats*"† called persons, as Dr. Worcester says, for want of a "better word;" and secondly, Whether one of these three subsistences, or improperly called persons, formed a personal union with a human soul, so that the Infinite mind, and a human mind, each possessing its own distinct consciousness, became a *complex person*. Such are the points, or rather phrases of difference between these Christians. And ought phrases like these, of which we find not a trace in the Bible, which cannot be defined by those who employ them, which convey to common minds no more meaning than words of an unknown tongue, and which present to the learned only flitting shadows of thought instead of clear and steady conceptions, to separate those who are united in the great principles which I have stated? Trinitarians indeed are apt to think themselves at an immeasurable distance from Unitarians. The reason, I think, is, that they are surrounded with a mist of obscure phraseology. Were this mist dispersed, I believe that they would be surprised at discovering their proximity to the quarter of the Unitarians, and would learn that they had been wasting their hostility on a band of friends and brothers. Whenever Trinitarians begin to explain themselves, we find that their three persons vanish into three *undefinable somethings*, and that *God suffered*

\* Wardlaw.

† This word has been used by Trinitarians in writing and conversation.

for us on the cross only by a figure or metaphysical fiction. Such is Trinitarianism, as it appears to my mind. In all this I may mistake, but I have no motive and certainly no desire to practise "concealment."

#### THE SYSTEM OF EXCLUSION AND DENUNCIATION CONSIDERED.

The object of Dr. Worcester, in the representation, which I have now considered, seems to be, to prepare the "orthodox" for separation from their Unitarian brethren. His remarks all tend to teach them, that they ought to refuse communion with Unitarians as Christians, to deny them the character and name of Christians, to deny their title to the ordinances of the gospel; in a word to disown them as brethren in Christ. On this point I shall now offer several observations.—But first I beg that it may be distinctly understood, that the zeal of liberal Christians on this point has no other object, than the peace and prosperity of the church of Christ. We are pleading, not our own cause, but the cause of our Master. The denial of our christian character by fallible and imperfect men gives us no anxiety. Our relation to Jesus Christ is not to be dissolved by the breath of man. Our christian rights do not depend on human passions. We have precisely the same power over our brethren, which they have over us, and are equally authorized to sever them from the body of Christ. Still more; if the possession of truth give superiour weight to denunciation, we are persuaded that our opposers will be the severest sufferers, should we think fit to hurl back the sentence of exclusion and condemnation. But we have no disposition to usurp power over our brethren. We believe, that the spirit which is so studiously excited against ourselves, has done incalculable injury to the cause of Christ; and we pray God to deliver us from its power.

Why are the name, character, and rights of Christians to be denied to Unitarians? Do they deny that Jesus is the Christ? do they reject his word as the rule of their faith and practice? do their lives discover indifference to his authority and example? No, these are not their offences. They are deficient in none of the qualifications of disciples, which were required in the primitive age. Their offence is, that they read the Scriptures for themselves, and derive from them different opinions on certain points, from those which others have adopted. Mistake of judgment is their pretended crime, and this crime is laid to their charge by men, who are as liable to mistake as themselves, and who seem to them to have fallen into some of the grossest errors. A condemning sentence from such judges carries with it no terror. Sorrow for its uncharitableness, and strong disapprobation of its arrogance, are the principal feelings which it inspires.

It is truly astonishing, that Christians are not more impressed with the unbecoming spirit, the arrogant style, of those, who deny the christian character to professed and exemplary followers of Jesus Christ, because they differ in opinion on some of the most subtle and difficult subjects of theology. A stranger, at hearing the language of these denouncers, would conclude, without a doubt, that they were clothed with infallibility, and were appointed to sit in judgment on their brethren. But for myself, I know not a shadow of pretence for the language of superiority assumed by Dr. Worcester and his brethren. Are they exempted from the common frailty of our nature? Has God given them superiour intelligence? Were they educated under circumstances more favourable to improvement than those whom they condemn. Have they brought to the scriptures more serious, anxious, and unwearied attention? Or do their lives express a deeper reverence for God and for his Son? No. They are fallible, imper-

fect men, possessing no higher means, and no stronger motives for studying the word of God, than their Unitarian brethren. And yet their language to them is virtually this. "We pronounce you to be in error, and in most dangerous error. We know that *we* are right, and that *you* are wrong in regard to the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. You are unworthy the christian name, and unfit to sit with *us* at the table of Christ. We offer you the truth, and you reject it at the peril of your souls." Such is the language of humble Christians to men, who in capacity and apparent piety are not inferior to themselves. This language has spread from the leaders through a considerable part of the community. Men in those walks of life which leave them without leisure or opportunities for improvement, are heard to decide on the most intricate points, and to pass sentence on men, whose lives have been devoted to the study of the Scriptures. The female, forgetting the tenderness of her sex, and the limited advantages which her education affords for a critical study of the Scriptures, inveighs with bitterness against the damnable errors of such men as Newton, Locke, Clarke and Price! The young too forget the modesty which belongs to their age, and hurl condemnation on the head which has grown gray in the service of God and mankind. Need I ask, whether this spirit of denunciation for supposed error becomes the humble and fallible disciples of Jesus Christ?

In vindication of this system of exclusion and denunciation it is often urged, that the "honour of religion," the "purity of the church," and the "cause of truth," forbid those who hold the true gospel to maintain fellowship with those who support corrupt and injurious opinions. Without stopping to notice the modesty of those who claim an exclusive knowledge of the true gospel, I would answer, that the "honour of religion" can never suffer by admitting to christian



fellowship men of irreproachable lives, whilst it has suffered most severely from that narrow and uncharitable spirit, which has excluded such men for imagined errors. I answer again, that the cause of truth can never suffer by admitting to christian fellowship men, who honestly profess to make the scriptures their rule of faith and practice, whilst it has suffered most severely by substituting for this standard conformity to human creeds and formularies. It is truly wonderful, if excommunication for supposed error be the method of purifying the church, that the church has been so long and so woefully corrupted. Whatever may have been the deficiencies of christians in other respects, they have certainly discovered no criminal reluctance in applying this instrument of purification. Could the thunders and lightnings of excommunication have corrected the atmosphere of the church, not one pestilential vapour would have loaded it for ages. The air of paradise would not have been more pure, more refreshing. But what does history tell us? It tells us, that the spirit of exclusion and denunciation has contributed more than all other causes to the corruption of the church, to the diffusion of error; and has rendered the records of the christian community as black, as bloody, as revolting to humanity, as the records of empires founded on conquest and guilt.

But it is said, did not the apostle denounce the erroneous, and pronounce a curse on the "abettors of another gospel." This is the strong hold of the friends of denunciation. But let us never forget, that the apostles were inspired men, capable of marking out with unerring certainty those, who substituted "another gospel" for the true. Show us their successors, and we will cheerfully obey them.

It is also important to recollect the *character* of those men, against whom the apostolick anathema was directed. They were men, who *knew distinctly* what the apostles taught. and yet opposed it; and

who endeavoured to sow division, and to gain followers in the churches which the apostles had planted. These men, resisting the known instructions of the authorized and inspired teachers of the gospel, and discovering a factious, selfish, mercenary spirit, were justly excluded as unworthy the christian name. But what in common with these men, have the Christians whom Dr. Worcester and his friends denounce? Do *these* oppose what they *know* to be the doctrine of Christ and his apostles? Do they not revere Jesus and his inspired messengers? Do they not dissent from Dr. Worcester, simply because they believe that Dr. Worcester dissents from their Lord?—Let us not forget, that the contest at the present day is not between the *apostles themselves*, and men who oppose their *known* instructions; but between uninspired Christians, who equally receive the apostles as authorized teachers of the gospel, and who only differ in judgment as to the interpretation of their writings. How unjust then is it for any class of Christians to confound their opponents with the factious and unprincipled sectarians of the primitive age. Mistake in judgment is the heaviest charge which one denomination has now a right to urge against another; and do we find that the apostles ever denounced *mistake* as “awful and fatal hostility” to the gospel, that they pronounced anathemas on men who wished to obey, but who misapprehended their doctrines. The apostles well remembered, that none ever mistook more widely than themselves. They remembered too the lenity of their Lord towards their errors, and this lenity they cherished and laboured to diffuse.

But Dr. Worcester will ask, if Christians have not a right to bear “solemn testimony” against opinions which are “utterly subversive of the gospel, and most dangerous to men’s eternal interests.” To this I answer, that the opinions of men, who discover

equal intelligence and piety with ourselves, are entitled to respectful consideration. If after inquiry they seem erroneous and injurious, we are authorized and bound, according to our ability, to expose, by fair and serious argument, their nature and tendency. But I maintain, that we have no right as individuals, or in an associated capacity, to bear our "solemn testimony" against these opinions, by menacing with ruin the Christian who listens to them, or by branding them with the most terrifying epithets, for the purpose of preventing candid inquiry into their truth. This is the fashionable mode of "bearing testimony," and it is a weapon which will always be most successful in the hands of the proud, the positive and overbearing, who are most impatient of contradiction, and have least regard to the rights of their brethren.

But whatever may be the right of Christians, as to bearing testimony against *opinions* which they deem injurious, I deny, that they have any right to pass a condemning sentence, on account of these opinions, on the *characters* of men whose general deportment is conformed to the gospel of Christ. Both scripture and reason unite in teaching, that the best and only standard of character is the life; and he who overlooks the testimony of a christian life, and grounds a sentence of condemnation on opinions, about which he as well as his brother may err, violates most flagrantly the duty of just and candid judgment, and opposes the peaceful and charitable spirit of the gospel. Jesus Christ says, "By their *fruits* shall ye know them." "Not every one, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he *who doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven." "Ye are my friends, if ye *do whatsoever I command you*." "He that heareth and *doeth these my sayings*," i. e. *the precepts* of the sermon on the mount, "I will liken him to a man who built his house upon a rock."

It would be easy to multiply similar passages. The whole scriptures teach us, that he and he only is a Christian, whose life is governed by the precepts of the gospel, and that by this standard alone, the profession of this religion should be tried. We do not deny, that our brethren have a right to form a judgment as to our christian character. But we insist that we have a right to be judged by the fairest, the most approved, and the most settled rules, by which character can be tried ; and when these are overlooked, and the most uncertain standard is applied, we are injured ; and an assault on character, which rests on this ground, deserves no better name than defamation and persecution.

I know that this suggestion of *persecution* will be indignantly repelled by those who deal most largely in denunciation. But persecution is a wrong or injury inflicted for opinions, and surely assaults on character fall under this definition. Some persons seem to think, that persecution consists in pursuing error with fire and sword ; and that therefore it has ceased to exist, except in distempered imaginations, because no class of Christians among us is armed with these terrible weapons. But, no. The form is changed, but the spirit lives. Persecution has given up its halberd and fagot, but it breathes venom from its lips, and secretly blasts what it cannot openly destroy. For example, a liberal minister, however circumspect in his walk, however irreproachable in all his relations, no sooner avows his honest convictions on some of the most difficult subjects, than his name begins to be a by-word. A thousand suspicions are infused into his hearers ; and it is insinuated, that he is a minister of satan, in "the guise of an angel of light." At a little distance from his home, calumny assumes a bolder tone. He is pronounced an infidel, and it is gravely asked, whether he believes in a God. At a greater distance, his

morals are assailed. He is a man of the world, "leading souls to hell," to gratify the most selfish passions. But notwithstanding all this, he must not say a word about persecution, for reports like these rack no limbs; they do not even injure a hair of his head; and how then is he persecuted?—Now for myself, I am as willing that my adversary should take my purse or my life, as that he should rob me of my reputation, rob me of the affection of my friends, and of my means of doing good. "He who takes from me my good name," takes the best possession of which human power can deprive me. It is true, that a Christian's reputation is comparatively a light object; and so is his property, so is his life; all are light things to him, whose hope is full of immortality. But, of all worldly blessings, an honest reputation is to many of us the most precious; and he who robs us of it, is the most injurious of mankind, and among the worst of persecutors. Let not the friends of denunciation attempt to escape this charge, by pleading their sense of duty, and their sincere desire to promote the cause of truth. St. Dominic was equally sincere, when he built the inquisition; and I doubt not that many torturers of Christians have fortified their reluctant minds, at the moment of applying the rack and the burning iron, by the sincere conviction, that the cause of truth required the sacrifice of its foes. I beg that these remarks may not be applied indiscriminately to the party called "orthodox," among whom are multitudes, whose humility and charity would revolt from making themselves the standards of christian piety, and from assailing the christian character of their brethren.

Many other considerations may be added to those which have been already urged, against the system of excluding from christian fellowship men of upright lives, on account of their opinions. It necessarily generates perpetual discord in the church. Men

differ in opinions as much as in features. No two minds are perfectly accordant. The shades of belief are infinitely diversified. Amidst this immense variety of sentiment, every man is right in his own eyes. Every man discovers errors in the creed of his brother. Every man is prone to magnify the importance of his own peculiarities, and to discover danger in the peculiarities of others. This is human nature. Every man is partial to his own opinions, because they are his own, and his self-will and pride are wounded by contradiction. Now what must we expect, when beings so erring, so divided in sentiment, and so apt to be unjust to the views of others, assert the right of excluding one another from the christian church on account of imagined error? As the Scriptures confine this right to no individual and to no body of Christians, it belongs alike to all; and what must we expect, when Christians of all capacities and dispositions, the ignorant, prejudiced, and self-conceited, imagine it their duty to prescribe opinions to Christendom, and to open or to shut the door of the church according to the decision which their neighbours may form on some of the most perplexing points of theology? This question unhappily has received answer upon answer in ecclesiastical history. We there see christians denouncing and excommunicating one another for supposed error, until every denomination has been pronounced accursed by some portion of the christian world; so that were the curses of men to prevail, not one human being would enter heaven. To me it appears, that to plead for the right of excluding men of blameless lives, on account of their opinions, is to sound the peal of perpetual and universal war. Arm men with this power, and we shall have "nothing but thunder." Some persons are sufficiently simple to imagine, that if this "horrid Unitarianism" were once hunted down, and put quietly into its grave, the church would be at peace. But, no: our present con-

tests have their origin, not in the "enormities" of Unitarianism, but very much in the principles of human nature, in the love of power, in impatience of contradiction, in men's passion for imposing their own views upon others, in the same causes which render them anxious to make proselytes to all their opinions. Were Unitarianism quietly interred, another and another hideous form of error would start up before the zealous guardians of the "purity of the church." The Arminian, from whom the pursuit has been diverted for a time by his more offending Unitarian brother, would soon be awakened from his dream of security, by the clamour of denunciation; and should the Arminian fall a prey, the Calvinists would then find time to look into the controversies among themselves, and almost every class would discover, with the eagle eye of their brethren at New-York, that those who differ from them hold "another gospel," and ought to be "resisted and denounced." Thus the wars of Christians will be perpetual. Never will there be peace, until Christians agree to differ, and agree to look for the evidences of Christian character in the temper and the life.

Another argument against this practice of denouncing the supposed errors of sincere professors of Christianity, is this. It exalts to supremacy in the church, men, who have the least claim to influence. Humble, meek, and affectionate Christians are least disposed to make creeds for their brethren, and to denounce those who differ from them. On the contrary, the impetuous, proud, and enthusiastick, men who cannot or will not weigh the arguments of opponents, are always most positive, and most unsparing in denunciation. These take the lead in a system of exclusion. They have no false modesty, no false charity, to shackle their zeal in framing fundamentals for their brethren, and in punishing the obstinate in

error. The consequence is, that creeds are formed which exclude from Christ's church some of his truest followers, which outrage reason as well as revelation, and which subsequent ages are obliged to mutilate and explain away, lest the whole religion be rejected by men of reflection. Such has been the history of the church. It is strange that we do not learn wisdom from the past. What man, who feels his own fallibility, who sees the errors into which the positive and "orthodox" of former times have been betrayed, and who considers his own utter inability to decide on the degree of truth, which every mind, of every capacity, must receive in order to salvation, will not tremble at the responsibility of prescribing to his brethren, *in his own words*, the views they must maintain on the most perplexing subjects of religion? Humility will always leave this work to others.

Another important consideration is, that this system of excluding men of apparent sincerity, for their opinions, entirely subverts free inquiry into the scriptures. When once a particular system is surrounded by this bulwark; when once its defenders have brought the majority to believe, that the rejection of it is a mark of depravity and perdition, what but the *name* of liberty is left to Christians? The obstacles to inquiry are as real, and may be as powerful, as in the neighbourhood of the inquisition. The multitude dare not think, and the thinking dare not speak. The right of private judgment may thus, in a protestant country, be reduced to a nullity. It is true, that men are sent to the scriptures; but they are told before they go, that they will be driven from the church on earth and in heaven, unless they find in the scriptures the doctrines which are embodied in the popular creed. They are told, indeed, to inquire for themselves; but they are also told, at what points inquiry must arrive; and the sentence of exclusion hangs over



them, if they happen to stray with some of the best and wisest men into forbidden paths. Now this "protestant liberty" is, in one respect, more irritating than Papal bondage. It mocks as well as enslaves us. It talks to us courteously as friends and brethren, whilst it rivets our chains. It invites and even charges us to look with our own eyes, but with the same breath warns us against seeing any thing which orthodox eyes have not seen before us. Is this a state of things favourable to serious inquiry into the truths of the gospel: yet, how long has the church been groaning under this cruel yoke?

Another objection to this system of excluding professed disciples of Christ, on account of their opinions, is, that it is inconsistent with the great principles of Congregationalism. In churches, where the power is lodged in a few individuals, who are supposed to be the most learned men in the community, the work of marking out and excluding the erroneous may seem less difficult. But among Congregationalists, the tribunal before which the offender is to be brought is *the whole church*, consisting partly of men in humble circumstances, and of unimproved minds; partly of men engaged in active and pressing business; and partly of men of education, whose studies have been directed to law and medicine. Now, is this a tribunal, before which the most intricate points of theology are to be discussed, and serious inquirers are to answer for opinions, which they have perhaps examined more laboriously and faithfully than all their judges? Would a church of humble men, conscious of their limited opportunities, consent to try for these pretended crimes professing Christians, as intelligent, as honest, and as exemplary as themselves? It is evident, that in the business of excluding men for opinions, a church can be little more than the tool of the minister, or a few influential members; and our churches are, in general, too in-

dependent and too upright to take this part in so solemn a transaction. To correct their deficiencies, and to quicken their zeal on this point, we are now threatened with *new tribunals, or consociations*, whose office it will be to try ministers for their errors, to inspect the churches, and to advise and assist them in the extirpation of "heresy." Whilst the laity are slumbering, the ancient and free constitution of our churches is silently undermined, and is crumbling away. Since argument is insufficient to produce uniformity of opinion, recourse must be had to more powerful instruments of conviction; I mean, to ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS. And are this people indeed prepared to submit to this most degrading form of vassalage; a vassalage, which reaches and palsies *the mind*, and imposes on it the dreams and fictions of men, for the everlasting truth of God!

These remarks lead me to the last consideration, which I shall urge, against the proposed system of exclusion and separation. This system will shake to the foundation our religious institutions, and destroy many habits and connexions which have had the happiest influence on the religious character of this people. In the first place, if christian communion and all acknowledgments of christian character are to be denied on the ground of difference of opinion, the annual "Convention of Congregational ministers, of Massachusetts," that ancient bond of union, must be dissolved; and in its dissolution we shall lose the edifying, honourable, and rare example of ministers regularly assembling, not to exercise power and to fetter the conscience, but to reciprocate kind affection, and to unite in sending relief to the families of their deceased brethren. This event may gladden the heart of the sectarian; it will carry no joy to the widow and orphan.—In the next place, the "Associations of ministers," in our different counties must in many cases be broken up, to make room for new

associations, founded on similarity of opinion. Thus, that intercourse, which now subsists between ministers of different persuasions, and which tends to enlarge the mind, and to give a liberality to the feelings, will be diminished, if not destroyed; and ministers, becoming more contracted and exclusive, will communicate more of this unhappy spirit to their societies.—In the next place, neighbouring churches, which, from their very foundation, have cultivated christian communion, and counselled and comforted each other, will be mutually estranged, and catching the temper of their religious guides, will exchange fellowship for denunciation; and instead of delighting in each other's prosperity, will seek each other's destruction.—Again, in the same church, where Christians of different views have long acknowledged each other as disciples of one Master, and have partaken the same feast of charity, angry divisions will break forth, parties will be marshalled under different leaders, the sentence of excommunication will be hurled by the majority on their guiltless brethren, (if the majority should be “orthodox.”) and thus anger, heart-burnings, and bitter recriminations will spread through many of our towns and churches.—Again; many of our religious societies will be rent asunder, their ministers dismissed, and religious institutions cease. It is well known, that many of our country parishes are able to support but a single minister. At the same time, they are divided in sentiment; and nothing but a spirit of charity and forbearance has produced that union, by which publick worship has been maintained. Once let the proposed war be proclaimed, let the standard of party be raised, and a minister must look for support to that party only to which he is attached. An “orthodox” minister should blush to ask it from men, whom he denounces for honest opinions, and to whom he denies all the ordinances of the gospel. It surely cannot be

expected that liberal Christians will contribute, by their property, to uphold a system of exclusion and intolerance directed against themselves. What then will be the fate of many of our societies? Their ministers, even now, can with difficulty maintain the conflict with other denominations: must they not sink, when deserted by their most efficient friends? Many societies will be left, as sheep without a shepherd, a prey to those whom we call Sectarians, but who will no longer have an exclusive right to the name, if the system of division, which has been proposed, be adopted. Many ministers will be compelled to leave the field of their labours and their prospects of usefulness; and I fear the ministry will lose its hold on the affection and veneration of men, when it shall have engendered so much division and contention.—But this is not all. The system of denying the christian name to those who differ from us in interpreting the scriptures, will carry discord not only into churches, but families. In how many instances are heads of families divided in opinion on the present subjects of controversy. Hitherto they have loved each other as partakers of the same glorious hopes, and have repaired in their domestick joys and sorrows to the same God (as they imagined,) through the same Mediator. But now they are taught, that they have *different Gods* and *different gospels*, and are taught that the friends of truth are not to hold communion with its rejectors. Let this doctrine be received, and one of the tenderest ties by which many wedded hearts are knit together will be dissolved. The family altar must fall. Religion will be known in many a domestick retreat, not as a bond of union, but a subject of debate, a source of discord or depression.

Now I ask, for what boon are all these sacrifices to be made? The great end is, that certain opinions, which have been embraced by many serious and in-

quiring Christians as the truth of God, may be driven from the church, and be dreaded by the people as among the worst of crimes. *Uniformity of opinion*, that airy good, which emperors, popes, councils, synods, bishops, and ministers have been seeking for ages, by edicts, creeds, threatenings, excommunications, inquisitions and flames, this is the great object of the system of exclusion, separation, and denunciation which is now to be introduced. To this we are to sacrifice our established habits and bonds of union, and this is to be pursued by means, which, as many reflecting men believe, threaten our dearest rights and liberties.

It is sincerely hoped, that reflecting laymen will no longer shut their eyes on this subject. It is a melancholy fact, that our long established congregational form of church government is menaced, and tribunals unknown to our churches, and unknown, as we believe, to the scriptures, are to be introduced; and introduced for the very purpose, that the supposed errors and mistakes of ministers and private Christians may be tried and punished as heresies, *i. e.* as crimes. In these tribunals, as in all ecclesiastical bodies, the clergy, who make theology their profession, will of necessity have a preponderating influence, so that the question now before the publick is in fact only a new form of the old controversy, which has agitated all ages, *viz. whether the clergy shall think for the laity, or prescribe to them their religion?* Were this question fairly proposed to the publick, there would be but one answer; but it is wrapped up in a dark phraseology about the purity and order of the church, a phraseology, which, I believe, imposes on multitudes of ministers as well as laymen, and induces acquiescence in measures, the real tendency of which they would abhor. It is, I hope, from no feeling of party, but from a sincere regard to the religion of Christ, that I would rouse the slumbering minds of this community

to the dangers which hang over their religious institutions. No power is so rapidly accumulated, or so dreadfully abused as ecclesiastical power. It assails men with menaces of eternal wo, unless they submit, and gradually awes the most stubborn and strongest minds into subjection. I mean not to ascribe the intention of introducing ecclesiastical tyranny to any class of Christians among us; but, I believe that many, in the fervour of a zeal which may be essentially virtuous, are about to touch with unhallowed hands the ark of God, to support christianity by measures which its mild and charitable spirit abhors. I believe, that many, overlooking the principles of human nature, and the history of the church, are about to set in motion a spring of which they know not the force, and cannot calculate the effects. I believe, that the seed of spiritual tyranny is sown, and although to a careless spectator it may seem the "smallest of all seeds," it has yet, within itself, a fatal principle of increase, and may yet darken this region of our country with its deadly branches.

The time is come, when the friends of christian liberty and christian charity are called to awake, and to remember their duties to themselves, to posterity, and to the church of Christ. The time is come, when the rights of conscience and the freedom of our churches must be defended with zeal. The time is come, when menace and denunciation must be met with a spirit, which will show, that we dread not the frowns, and lean not on the favour of man. The time is come, when every expression of superiority on the part of our brethren should be repelled as criminal usurpation. But in doing this, let the friends of liberal and genuine christianity remember the spirit of their religion. Let no passion or bitterness dishonour their sacred cause. In contending for the gospel, let them not lose its virtues or forfeit its promises.—We are indeed called to pass

through one of the severest trials of human virtue, the trial of controversy. We should carry with us a sense of its danger. Religion, when made a subject of debate, seems often to lose its empire over the heart and life. The mild and affectionate spirit of christianity gives place to angry recriminations and cruel surmises. Fair dealing, uprightness, and truth are exchanged for the quibbling and arts of sophistry. The devotional feelings, too, decline in warmth and tenderness. Let us then watch and pray. Let us take heed that the weapons of our warfare be not carnal. Whilst we repel usurpation, let us be just to the general rectitude of many by whom our christian rights are invaded. Whilst we repel the uncharitable censures of men, let us not forget that deep humility and sense of unworthiness, with which we should ever appear before our Maker. In our zeal to maintain the great truth, that OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN is alone the Supreme God, let us not neglect that intercourse with him, without which the purest conceptions will avail little to enthrone him in our hearts. In our zeal to hold fast the "word of Christ" in opposition to human creeds and formularies, let us not forget, that our Lord demands another and a still more unsuspecting confession of him, even the exhibition of his spirit and religion in our lives.

The controversy in which we are engaged is indeed painful ; but it was not chosen, but forced upon us, and we ought to regard it as a part of the discipline to which a wise Providence has seen fit to subject us. Like all our other trials, it is designed to promote our moral perfection. I trust, too, that it is designed to promote the cause of truth. Whilst I would speak diffidently of the future, I still hope, that a brighter day is rising on the christian church, than it has yet enjoyed. The gospel is to shine forth in its native glory. The violent excitement, by which some of the corruptions of this divine system are now

supported, cannot be permanent ; and the uncharitableness with which they are enforced, will re-act, like the persecutions of the church of Rome, in favour of truth. Already we have the comfort of seeing many disposed to inquire, and to inquire without that terror, which has bound as with a spell so many minds. We doubt not, that this inquiry will result in a deep conviction that christianity is yet disfigured by errors which have been transmitted from ages of darkness. Of this, at least, we are sure, that inquiry, by discovering to men the difficulties and obscurities which attend the present topics of controversy, will terminate in what is infinitely more desirable than doctrinal concord, in the diffusion of a mild, candid, and charitable temper. I pray God, that this most happy consummation may be in no degree obstructed by any unchristian feelings, which, notwithstanding my sincere efforts, have escaped me in the present controversy.



## NOTE.

It would be easy to point out many exceptionable passages in Dr. Worcester's letter ; but I wish to "abstain even from the appearance" of that minute and carping criticism, so common in controversy, which, overlooking the general import of a book, and the great points of controversy, seizes on unguarded expressions, exposes petty inaccuracies, extorts inferences of which the author never dreamed, and aims to humble an opponent instead of meeting the great question in dispute. There are, however, a few particulars in Dr. Worcester's letter, which ought not to be passed over in that silence, which in the present and in my former remarks I have observed towards many objectionable expressions and passages.

A common reader would imagine from Dr. Worcester's language, that from the age of Christ to the present time, there has been a succession of Christians called "orthodox," who have agreed in opinion on the disputed doctrines of the gospel. But this is a fiction. The opinions of some of the "most orthodox" in New-England, on the Trinity, would have exposed them, I fear, to excommunication by the "orthodox" in some of the early ages of christianity. If I were to define the word "orthodox," I should say that it means the predominant party in the church, and especially those who are so destitute of humility as to arrogate to themselves an exclusive understanding of the gospel.

Dr. Worcester in his first letter had this remarkable, and I think, very unhappy passage. "The God whom *you* worship, is different from *ours*." To remove this impression, I declared very fully, the God whom I worship. Dr. Worcester has taken no notice of this statement, but observes, "We worship the *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*. Do you worship this same God." To this question I will endeavour to give a satisfactory answer. If by "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost*," Dr. Worcester means the *God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, who glorified his son Jesus*, whom Peter preached Acts iii ; if he means *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* to whom Paul bent the knee ; if he means

that God whom Jesus worshipped in the solemn hour of death, saying, "*Father into thy hands, I commit my spirit ;*" if he means that God of whom Jesus spoke in these memorable words, "*the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ;*" if he means that God of whom Paul said ; "*To us (i. e. to Christians) there is one God, even the Father ;*" if by "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost,*" Dr. Worcester means *this God*, who is proposed to us in these passages, *the God of Jesus Christ, of Abraham, of Paul and of Christians*, then I worship "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*" I sincerely hope that this is Dr. Worcester's meaning, for it would give me great pain to believe that he and his friends worship any other than the "*God of Jesus Christ*" and the *God of Christians*.—Why does he use phraseology, which renders this point in the least degree doubtful? Why does he not speak of the true God in the simple and affecting language of the scriptures? Jesus in his sermon on the Mount, has given us very particular instructions in relation to the object of our worship, and has closed this discourse with a solemn declaration, that if we obey the precepts which it contains, we shall be "*like the man who built his house on a rock.*"—Now in this longest and most particular discourse of Jesus, whom does he tell us to worship. Does he say, when ye pray, pray to "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*" No—His language, so simple, so touching, so encouraging, should be engraven on all our hearts. "*Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father who is in secret.*" Again. "*When ye pray, say, Our Father, who art in Heaven ;*" And again. "*If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.*" To these most interesting precepts of Jesus, I and my brethren yield entire and cheerful obedience. With these precepts the whole scriptures concur. We find not *one* passage in the scriptures, commanding us to worship "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost ;*" not *one* precedent, which authorizes such worship, and while we feel ourselves bound to exercise christian candour towards those who adopt this form of worship, we are not without solemn apprehension, that, in this respect, they are guilty of irreverence towards the word of God, and of preferring to it the commandments and inventions of men. Let them weigh seriously these remarks.

In my former remarks, I repelled the assertion of Dr. Worcester, *that our Saviour is infinitely inferior to his*, by declaring that “We believe that God saves us by his son Jesus Christ in whom he dwells, and through whom he bestows pardon and eternal life.” Dr. Worcester says, that this is to declare that *Jesus Christ* is not *our Saviour*. I lament that his letter is dishonoured by such a remark. Does he not know that the apostles again and again speak of God as our *Saviour*, and as *saving us by Jesus Christ*? Do they therefore deny Jesus to be our Saviour? In 2 Tim. i. 1, we find these words of Paul, “Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the commandment of *God our Saviour*, and of Jesus Christ our hope.” Here *God*, and not Jesus Christ, is called the Saviour. Did Paul intend to deny this name of Jesus Christ? Is not this name applied to Jesus because he is the *minister of God* in our salvation, and do we then refuse it to him, when we declare that it primarily belongs to God, his Father. In 1 Tim. ii. 3, we meet these words, “This is acceptable in the sight of *God our Saviour*, who will have all men to be saved; for there is *one God*, and *one Mediator* between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Here *God* is eminently *our Saviour*, and Jesus saves us as he is his minister. In Titus 3, 4, &c. we see this title applied both to God and Jesus Christ in a manner which shows that it belongs to God in the first and highest sense. “After that the kindness of *God our Saviour* appeared, he saved us by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ our Saviour*.\*” The apostle, it seems, thought that he might call Jesus Christ our Saviour, although he considered *God* as originally and eminently our Saviour, and as saving us *through* or *by* Jesus Christ. I will add one more passage from Jude. “Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, to the *only God, our SAVIOUR*, be glory *through Jesus Christ our Lord*.” See Griesbach. Had Dr. Worcester weighed these passages, he would not have made the rash and very improper charge, which I am considering.—Is not the reader inclined to think, that the apostles wrote very much like Unitarians?

It was my intention in this note to show the weakness of the scripture proof of the Trinity which Dr. Worcester has

\* I omit some clauses that the connexion may be better seen.

adduced in his letter. But this pamphlet is already extended beyond my wishes ; and besides, I wish to separate the discussion of the Trinity from the present controversy. I would therefore only observe in relation to the texts which have been collected by Dr. Worcester, that nothing is easier than to produce a string of texts in support of almost every doctrine. Calvinism and Arminianism, Universal Salvation and the doctrine of eternal punishment, transubstantiation and other tenets of popery, may each and all be supported by detached passages as conclusive as those which Dr. Worcester has produced for the Trinity. This mode of defence is peculiarly suited to the Trinitarian cause, which rests on a comparatively small number of disconnected texts. Unitarianism, besides being directly affirmed in particular passages, runs through the whole scriptures, appears on the whole current of sentiment and language in the old and the new Testament, its proofs are not therefore to be despatched in so narrow a compass. It is my earnest desire that the publick attention may be turned from individuals to this point. Why cannot this controversy be conducted with calmness, without impeachment of character or motives, and without appeals to popular feeling ? We have all an equal interest in discovering truth ; and no zeal, and no sophistry, can long support the cause of error. Let us then encourage fair and dispassionate discussion, and be careful to throw no obstruction in the way of free and honest inquiry.

I have now a few words to offer on the "*separation*" made by some of the Unitarians in England, to which Dr. Worcester seems disposed to attach great importance. I inferred (perhaps inconsiderately) from the statement of Dr. Worcester in his first letter, that these Unitarians had so far introduced their peculiarities into their publick worship, that other Christians were virtually excluded. Of this separation I expressed no approbation, but simply observed that it by no means amounted to the separation which is recommended in this country, which would deny the christian character to a large body of professing Christians. Dr. Worcester, however, by a kind of reasoning, which is too common with him, infers that this kind of separation would be quite agreeable to me, and spends a page in observations founded chiefly on my silence. Since writing my remarks, I have been happy to learn that the impressions which I received from Dr. Worcester respecting these English Unitarians were incorrect. I am inform-

ed, that their worship is singularly free from peculiarities, and that all Christians may join in it without hesitation or pain. I learn, that Mr. Lindsey introduced into his chapel the Liturgy of the church of England, omitting only the few parts in which the doctrine of the Trinity is recognized, and directing all the prayers to the Father through the Son. This is the worship which is most common among all denominations in this country, and by which no Christian can be offended. Most sincerely do I wish, that our publick services may be marked by this liberal character. Very different classes of Christians, I am persuaded, may unite in the same worship, and be built up at once in godliness and charity. I have listened with great satisfaction to the prayers of Trinitarians, and I have heard from very ardent Trinitarians expressions of great interest in prayers which have been offered by Unitarians. True piety, when unfettered by system, approaches the Father through the Son, and supplicates earnestly for the aids of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Worcester speaks in his letter of the "*awful temerity* of adjudging to eternal life, men, however fair their character in the eyes of the world, however renowned for what the world calls wisdom, however distinguished among the friends of *science* or of *sacred literature*, who nevertheless deny the blood of atonement, degrade the Lord, who bought them, to the condition of a mere creature, go about to establish their own righteousness," &c. This passage is designed to teach us that we cannot without *awful temerity* admire the christian virtues and labours of such men as Newton, Locke, Lardner and Price, or cherish the delightful hope that they have gone to receive the rewards of faithful servants of Jesus Christ. I confess that I am shocked when I hear the humble Lardner, (at whom these remarks seem principally aimed) charged with degrading that Saviour, to whose cause his life was devoted, with criminal insensibility to his honour and with a proud dependence on "his own righteousness." There must be something wrong, dreadfully wrong, in a religious system, which calls us to breathe mildew on the fairest and most interesting characters which have adorned the church, and to repress the gratitude and admiration which spontaneously spring up in a pure mind towards the most illustrious benefactors of mankind. If it be "*awful temerity*" to think Lardner a good man, where is the human being whose

piety we ought not to distrust. What can preserve us from distrusting the reality of all human virtue? To this mournful result, the present system of denunciation directly tends. It tends to diffuse the most fatal kind of skepticism, a skepticism in regard to the *reality* of all moral and religious excellence. If the marks of christian virtue which have been exhibited by Unitarians be false and delusive, then none are worthy of confidence, and the slanders which the Atheist has cast on human piety cannot be refuted.—If “orthodoxy” encourage and demand this fatal censoriousness, it cannot be of God, it cannot ultimately prevail.













